STATE

Towns told gays pose threat

Family Values takes drive to rural areas

By **Louis Aguilar**
Gazette Telegraph

MONTE VISTA — This small town nestled in the sparsely populated San Luis Valley seems an unlikely battleground for the next round over gay rights in Colorado.

But it is here and places like it where Colorado for Family Values is bringing its "community-watch" seminars to garner support and warn of threats from a "militant homosexual agenda."

The seminars mark an aggressive new campaign for the Colorado Springs-based group, which successfully fought for passage of Amendment 2 last November.

Now it's asking supporters throughout the state to fight any group, business, school, church and individual in their community that supports gay rights.

"Homosexuals have been targeting your town for its political agenda for quite some time now." Kevin Tebedo, executive director of Colorado for Family Values, told a crowd of about 120 people in Monte Vista on Thursday.

"I'm here to show you . . . what you can do about it."

A spokesman for Ground Zero, a Colorado Springs-based group opposed to Amendment 2, called the seminars deceitful.

"Colorado for Family Values is simply indoctrinating the naive," said Franklin Whitworth. "Every element of the program is filled with deceit and misrepresentations. It's typical of their extremist tactics."

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> **CFV's Kevin Tebedo**

■ Campbell blasts pro-Klan, anti-gay posters/**B2**

Monte Vista was one of the first stops for Colorado for Family Values' latest blitz. Today, it's Lamar, and every weekend through April, representatives from the group will be in a different town.

Tebedo said the group plans more meetings later, and eventually will hold seminars in Colorado Springs and Denver. Besides Monte Vista, meetings have been held in Boulder and Fort Collins.

He said he hopes the meetings generate grassroots groups across Colorado that will carry out Colorado for Family Values' agenda against special rights for gays.

"Folks, there is no compromise on this issue," Tebedo told the Monte Vista crowd. "The goal of the militant homosexual agenda is total affirmation of their lifestyle in society. It's all or nothing."

Amendment 2, which bans laws that protect gays, lesbians and bisexuals from discrimination based

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Family Values/Gay-friendly businesses to be targeted

From B1

on their sexual orientation, won 53 percent of the vote Nov. 3. But in January, a Denver District Court judge blocked the amendment from becoming law until a constitutional challenge is settled by the courts.

At the meetings, attendants receive detailed outlines explaining how they can monitor their communities in the meantime. The literature encourages supporters to find out how local politicians and school board members stand on gay rights.

The group also is asking supporters to find out which businesses in their towns have written nondiscrimination policies protecting gays, and "sensitivity training" programs that include homosexuality.

The outline advises supporters to picket "pro-homosexual" establishments and even boycott them — the very tactic Amendment 2 supporters decry as economic blackmail when it's done by the measure's critics.

"To say that we are advocating boycott would be wrong," Tebedo said. "Colorado for Family Values does not do that. We are simply saying that it is an option you might want to consider."

On the surface, Monte Vista seems an odd place to be talking of fighting gay rights. City officials and civic leaders of this town of 3,900 can't recall when the issue has ever been discussed. There isn't even an openly gay community in the area, townspeople said.

"Amendment 2 is not even news here anymore," said Monte Vista Mayor Mike Lister. "In fact, it was hardly an issue even during the campaign." He said he can't recall any local official taking a stand on the measure during the campaign.

The mayor and others were skeptical that a grassroots group would form out of the meeting in their town. Bob Snyder, acting superintendent of Monte Vista public schools, said he thought the effort would fail because it runs counter to the "rugged individualistic character" of the townspeople.

"This is one of the most tolerant areas I've ever been to," he said. "That old Western tradition of just letting people be, of judging the individual on his or her merit, is really the way most people live here."

Yet it is places like Monte Vista where Colorado for Family Values gained much of its support. Rio Grande County voted 2 to 1 for the measure.

Bruce and Kris Steffens — who helped gather signatures in Monte Vista last year to get Amendment 2 on the ballot — organized the meeting.

"We just want the truth to be told," Kris Steffens said.

"We're so upset with the media portraying the militant homosexuals as the victims of this. We are the victims. Some judge stole our vote and this agenda is still going on. And I don't want that. I don't want that lifestyle forced upon me, and don't want my children taught by homosexuals. I don't want it promoted as acceptable."

That theme was driven home again and again by Tebedo during the 3½-hour presentation. He said gays control the power bases of government and many big businesses, and that they want schools to encourage children to be homosexual.

"Believe me, if the National Education Association has a presence here, then you have a pro-homosexual group at your schools," he said.

At the end of his presentation, Tebedo hammered home the point of this new campaign. "The bottom line is this basic question: Should homosexuals be offered a legitimacy in this nation by granting them a civil rights status, and do you want schools teaching your children that it's a legitimate, viable lifestyle?"

Some in the crowd shouted back "No!"

After the speech, many said they were ready for action.

"You bet, I want to help with this," said Beverley Stewart, 55, of Sargents. "I've been a teacher for 26 years and I think it would be a good idea to have specific policies on this issue in the school."

Doug Baird, 38, a ranch hand, said he thought the campaign fit in nicely with individualism so cherished in the area.

"People, here, in the valley, they mind their own business. And I think some of what they are saying is just making sure that this agenda isn't forced upon them."

But Baird, who has gay friends, said he was wary of some of Colorado for Family Values' tactics. He didn't like the fact that the group is showing a video at these meetings that contains graphic scenes from a San Francisco gay pride parade.

"There is a sensationalism going on that I think could be dangerous," he said. "Showing some graphic and vulgar stuff of what's going on in San Francisco, that's not the way my friends are. I kind of resent that they may be linked or have to face those kind of stereotypes. We don't need that."